

REMARKS

By this amendment, Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended, claims 2-18 have been canceled, and claims 19-23 have been added. No new matter has been added. Applicants also note that a number of editorial amendments have been made to the specification and abstract for grammatical and general readability purposes. No new matter has been added.

I. Information Disclosure Statements

Applicants note that Information Disclosure Statements have been filed on October 25, 2007; March 4, 2008; March 13, 2008; and April 25, 2008. Applicants kindly request that the Examiner consider the references cited therein, and return the initialed and signed copies of the corresponding PTO-1449 Forms with the next Office paper.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16 and 17 are allowed. As noted above, claim 1 has been amended herein, and claims 2-18 have been canceled.

Regarding amended claim 1, Applicants note that claim 1 has been amended herein so as to recite the features of a first parameter calculation step of calculating a first parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the current picture and a first reference picture; a second parameter calculation step of calculating a second parameter corresponding to a temporal distance between the first reference picture and a second reference picture; a judgment step of judging whether or not a value of a third parameter calculated based on the first and the

second parameters is included in a predetermined range; a predictive pixel value generation step of (i) generating a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient calculated by the first parameter and the second parameter, in a case where it is judged, in said judgment step, that the value of the third parameter is included in the predetermined range, and (ii) generating a predictive pixel value of the current picture by scaling a pixel value of the first reference picture and a pixel value of the second reference picture using a weighting coefficient of a predetermined value, in a case where it is judged, in said judgment step, that the value of the third parameter is not included in the predetermined range; and a decoding step of decoding the current picture using the predictive pixel value calculated in said predictive pixel value generation step.

Applicants respectfully submit that the prior art references cited in the Office Action do not disclose, suggest or otherwise render obvious the above-noted combination of features recited in amended claim 1, and moreover, note that amended claim 1 is patentable for at least similar reasons as set forth in the Examiner's statement of reasons for allowance on pages 2-3 of the Office Action.

Regarding new claims 19, 21 and 22, Applicants note that these claims recite similar features as claim 1 (which is drawn to an image decoding method), but are directed to a decoding apparatus (claim 19), an image coding method (claim 21), and an image coding apparatus (claim 22). Applicants submit that claims 19, 21 and 22 are patentable for at least similar reasons as noted above with respect to claim 1.

Regarding claims 20 and 23, Applicants note that claim 20 depends from claim 1, and

that claim 23 depends from claim 21. Accordingly, Applicants submit that claims 20 and 23 are patentable at least by virtue of their dependency.

III. Claim Rejections

Claims 9, 12, 15 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 101, as being directed to non-statutory subject matter. As noted above, claims 9, 12, 15 and 18 have been canceled by this amendment.

IV. Conclusion

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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